

RAMADAN IN AMERICA

Information Resource Center, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Jakarta

RAMADAN IN AMERICA: FAITH AND COMMUNITY

As with Muslim communities around the world, Ramadan for American Muslims is marked by fasting and charity. But while fasting is observed one month of the year, many Muslim Americans make charity and giving back to their communities year-round activities.

From disaster relief to promoting peace, Muslims are making a difference in communities throughout the United States.

Read more at: http://www.america.gov/ramadan_community.html



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MUSLIM AMERICAN SPENDS WEEK ON STREET FOR RAMADAN

Yusef Ramelize leaves the comforts of home to help New York's homeless

By M. Scott Bortot, *IIP Digital*, August 17, 2010



Yusef Ramelize is drawing attention to homelessness in New York City

For Ramadan, New York City resident Yusef Ramelize will fast, pray and give alms to the poor. But how he helps the needy during the holy month sets him apart from other Muslims in America, or anywhere else.

Ramelize is spending part of

Ramadan living on the street. For him, this is the perfect way to draw attention to his city's growing homeless population. For the second year in a row, Ramelize is helping New Yorkers in need with his Homeless for One Week project. Ramelize first lived on the street for a week in 2009 after it became clear that people needed to understand homelessness.

"I asked myself, 'What can I do to raise awareness?' and then I decided that I was going to go homeless for a day," Ramelize said. "But then I said, 'You know what? I want

to make the biggest sacrifice that I can' and I decided to come up with the idea of going homeless for a week."

Ramelize, a production manager at an information services company, makes good use of his time on the street. Through his website, *Homeless-forOneWeek.com*, Ramelize aims to raise \$5,000 for the Food Bank for New York City. In March 2009, he brought in more than \$3,000 for New York's Coalition for the Homeless.

Read the complete story at: <http://goo.gl/pAEht>

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AN IFTAR FOR EVERYONE

Washington's Ramadan celebrations are as varied as its Muslim community

By Danielle Zielinski, *IIPDigital*, August 23, 2010

The sun goes down, and in a mosque in one Washington, D.C., neighborhood, people eat dates and then begin the evening prayer. In an apartment in northern Virginia, friends gather for a meal. In restaurants, in college dormitory rooms and in homes across the metropolitan area, people come together to break the daily fast and observe iftar.

Welcome to the month of Ramadan in Washington, where the area's active Muslim community makes sure there are plenty of ways to celebrate their faith's holiest time of year.

"In D.C., there's stuff going on every single night," says Mannal Bakhsh, who has lived in the area her entire life. "You don't have to go to a mosque. You can go to a friend's house; you can go to a restaurant."

Muslims believe Ramadan is the month in which the first verses of the Quran were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad more than 1,400 years ago, and use it as a time for spiritual reflection and self-discipline.

Fasting every day for an entire month isn't easy, especially with Ramadan falling in August, which in Washington makes for a long day. As many as 14 hours pass between sunrise and sunset on some of the hottest and most humid days of the year in the Washington area. But Muslims stress that there's more to Ramadan than fasting. For many, it's a time to give back. Those who do

not fast - because of age, illness, pregnancy or other health reasons — commit to feed another person for the entire month. Several local Muslim groups have held fundraising iftars in the past few weeks, with proceeds going to aid victims of the catastrophic flooding in Pakistan.

The fast "just kind of comes with the territory," said Sarrah Abu-Lughod, who was born in Saudi Arabia, grew up in Wisconsin and now lives in Washington. "When people realize that the fast isn't from just food and drink, and more an experiment in self-control and focus, it becomes less about hunger and appetite. Regardless, though, it is brutal when a co-worker pops a bag of popcorn."

Despite living and working among people who are not fasting, most find that the multicultural nature of Washington makes it an inviting place to observe Ramadan.

"I feel in D.C. — wearing a scarf, being a Muslim — people are more open," said Bushra Zartasht, who previously lived in Norway. "I was so surprised I could find [traditional iftar food including] dates at the normal [supermarket]."

And even though Ramadan is typically a time dominated by family, Washington's large number of young Muslims — many living away from their homes and relatives — ensure that no one is left out.



Young girls break their Ramadan fast at an iftar dinner in New Jersey.

"There are many people here without their families, so the iftar gatherings end up being many young people gathering and very few little kids running underfoot, which is very different from any other community I've been in," said AbuLughod, who has lived in Washington for three years. "The hustle and bustle of Ramadan here is unique."

The diversity of the area's Muslim community also means that regardless of personal traditions, there is an iftar for everyone. Lindsey Stephenson, a former Fulbright scholar who lived in Kuwait in 2007 and 2008, takes part in two iftars each week that are hosted by different groups. On Tuesday night, it's a women-only gathering. On Wednesdays, she attends iftar with a co-educational group called the D.C. Quran Halaqa, which includes people from many different ethnic, cultural, sectarian and professional backgrounds. "Both of these are groups of young American Muslims in their 20s and 30s, and I think many of us feel like this is the beginning of truly a homegrown American

Muslim community that really sees itself as independent from the culture-fused Islam of new immigrants," Stephenson said. Teddy Galloway, who converted to Islam in 2009, said his first Ramadan, spent in San Diego training Marines, was tough. It was hot. He worked 12-hour days. And he was fasting alone. But he stuck it out.

Now living in Virginia, he hosts a meet-up group for other Muslims that has nearly 50 members, and also encourages non-Muslim friends to try fasting and celebrate iftar with him. "I don't have a family to fast with," he said, "so I invite people to fast with me."

Galloway said that as a newer member of the faith, his view of the Muslim community is probably different from that of people who grew up with its traditions. But in the end, Ramadan is about a sense of togetherness.

"It feels good to be a part of something that so many people, regardless of their differences, come together to do," he said.

Source: <http://goo.gl/0nyFA>

Related links:

Ramadan is Time for Getting to Know Muslims in America

<http://goo.gl/I9trJ>

Muslim Students Observe Ramadan Away from Home

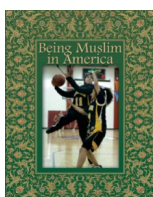
<http://goo.gl/aU1Y2>

Muslim-American Charitable Efforts Extend Beyond Ramadan

<http://goo.gl/mIUPq>

RESOURCES

ePublications



Being Muslim in America

America.gov,
March 2009.

This illustrated
book links the

Muslim American experience to those of other American racial religious and immigrant groups. *This publication is available online at:* <http://goo.gl/pvocq>

Being Muslim in America: Information Package

Information Resource Center, U.S. Embassy Jakarta, Aug 2010
This package is accessible online at: <http://goo.gl/UhzlG>

Multimedia

Photo Galleries: Muslims in America—A timeline of Key Events, America.gov

Adapted from the U.S. Department of State's publication *Being Muslim in America*, two photo galleries (link provided below) document important historic milestones for Muslims in America.

*Photo Gallery 1: Muslims in America 1619-1934

Source: <http://goo.gl/cBCsU>

*Photo Gallery 2: Muslims in America: 1957–2007 .

Source: <http://goo.gl/Gls4y>

Video: Eid in America

America.gov, October 30, 2008
More than 400,000 ethnically-diverse Muslims celebrate Eid and the holy month of Ramadan

in Washington, D.C. Friends and family come together to help the homeless and the needy and to share in the breaking of the fast. .
Watch at: <http://goo.gl/ajuZ4>

Video: The Arab International Festival

America.gov, July 29, 2008
Dearborn, Michigan, has the highest concentration of Arabs in the world outside of the Middle East. Every year, the city celebrates its Arab residents and culture with a three-day-long festival. The Arab International Festival attracts people of all nationalities, races and creeds and serves as a testimony to the joy of living in a diverse society.
Watch at: <http://goo.gl/pWQz>

Video: Dearborn, Arab Capital of America

America.gov, July 29, 2008
Dearborn, Michigan, is a thriving center of Arab life in America. More than 30 percent of the population is of Middle Eastern descent, and cultural shops, businesses and attractions blend seamlessly into this American city. Dearborn high-

lights include the 7,990-square-meter Islamic Center of America and the National Arab American Museum. Dearborn exemplifies America's love of diversity, cultural exchange and integration
Watch at: <http://goo.gl/vehrN>

Books

(Available in IRC collection)

Educating the Muslims of

America / edited by Yvonne Y. Haddad, Farid Senzai, and Jane I. Smith. New York : Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 9780195375206

Encyclopedia of Muslim-

American History/edited by Edward E. Curtis IV. New York, NY: Facts on File, 2010. ISBN: 9780816075751

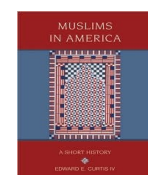


The Future of Islam / John L.

Esposito. New York : Oxford University Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780195165210

Journey into America : The Challenge of Islam / Akbar Ahmed. Washington, D.C. : Brookings Institution Press, c2010. ISBN: 9780815703877

Islam in America/Jane I. Smith. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, c2010. ISBN: 9780231147118



Muslims in America : A Short History / Edward E. Curtis IV. New York :

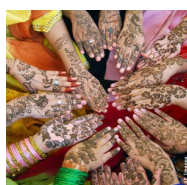
Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 9780195367560

Who Speaks For Islam? : What a Billion Muslims Really Think / John L. Esposito, Dalia Mogahed. New York, NY : Gallup Press, c2008. ISBN: 9781595620170

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<http://69.63.217.22/U10086Staff/OPAC/index.asp>

FEATURE: A MULTICULTURAL RAMADAN



The world's 1.5 billion Muslims will observe the month of Ramadan in different ways, blending their own cultural customs with Islamic tra-

ditions of prayer and fasting. In the United States alone, Muslims come from more than 80 countries and represent a mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, ideological, social and economic groups. Although the principal teachings of Ramadan remain consistent,

the fusion between religious traditions and diverse cultures embodies the interconnectivity and diffusion of a modern, globalized world.

This feature is available at:
<http://www.america.gov/ramadan.html>

MOSQUES IN AMERICA: A BLENDING OF CULTURES

There are 1,900 mosques in the United States, representing many different cultures and traditions.

Islamic Center of Washington, Washington, D.C.



President Dwight Eisenhower spoke at the

Islamic Center of Washington dedication in 1957, affirming America's principle of religious freedom. At the time, the center was the largest Muslim place of worship in the Western Hemisphere.

The center seeks to promote a better understanding of Islam in

the United States. It was conceived in the mid-1940s by an Egyptian diplomat and a Palestinian immigrant businessman who set up a foundation to build a mosque. Many Islamic nations donated funds, decorations and craftsmen to the project, and support also came from American

Muslims. Today more than 3,000 worshippers attend Friday prayers. The center also offers services such as marriage ceremonies, burials, counseling, instruction in Islam and Arabic and public tours.

More info on mosques in America: <http://goo.gl/rzeBZ>

DID YOU KNOW?

- Sixty-five percent of the Muslim American population are first-generation immigrants, and 61 percent of the foreign-born arrived in the 1990s or later.
- American Muslim Population is estimated 2,595,000 in 2010
- The top countries of origin for Muslim immigrants to the United States in 2009 were Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- Muslim Americans spend about \$170 billion on consumer products annually, according to a 2007 figure by advertising agency JWT, and this figure is expected to grow.
- Ifar dinners at the White House during Ramadan have become regular occasions since the mid-1990s.
- An imam can serve in several different roles in the United States. In most African-American mosques, the imam operates in both spiritual and administrative capacities. In predominantly immigrant mosques, however, the imam is more likely to be a spiritual leader only.
- The largest mosque in the United States, opened by the Islamic Center of America in 2005, is in Dearborn, Michigan.
- Keith Ellison (Democrat-Minnesota), is the first Muslim elected to Congress and the first African American to represent Minnesota.
- Miss America 2010, Rima Fakih, is a Muslim American woman of Lebanese descent.
- Zaytuna College, the America's First Muslim college was open in Berkeley, California, 2010

Sources: <http://goo.gl/LGAZF> | <http://ellison.house.gov/> | <http://goo.gl/Ahqyj> | <http://goo.gl/S8gVj> | <http://goo.gl/FGaSy>

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